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# APPLICATION OF AYURVEDA HERBS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a multifactorial lifestyle disorder in which abdominal pain is associated with defecation or change in bowel habit with features of disordered defecation and distension. Approximately 20% of general population fulfils diagnostic criteria for IBS but only 10% follows doctor's consultation because of gastrointestinal symptoms. IBS is associated with disturbed abdominal gastro intestinal motor function and enhanced visceral perception as well as psychological and genetic factor. Anxiety and somatization are more common in IBS than in the general population, however, they correlate poorly with symptoms. In Ayurveda rationally it can be correlated with Grahani, Sangraha Grahani and Ghatiyantra Grahani on the basis of its clinical manifestation. Grahani is a disease of gastrointestinal tract which is produced due to weakness of Agni (digestive fire) causing food to be either partially digested or over digested leading to the formation of Ama-toxins. The management of IBS is thus closely dependent upon the management of Agni and Ama. Many Ayurveda herbs mentioned in classics for Grahani treatment are successfully used in the management of IBS. The paper will critically do a review of Ayurveda herbs useful in management of IBS.

KEYWORDS: IBS, Ayurveda, Herbal management.

#### INTRODUCTION

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a functional bowel disorder characterized by abdominal pain, altered bowel habits in the absence of structural abnormalities<sup>1</sup>. Approximately 20% of general population fulfils diagnostic criteria for IBS but only 10% needs doctor consultation because of gastrointestinal symptoms<sup>2</sup>. Young women are affected 2-3 times more often than men. It is conceptualized as a 'cluster of bowel syndrome' often called by a large variety of names, like spastic colitis, irritable colon syndrome, nervous diarrhoea, mucus colitis,  $etc^2$ . neurosis. The principal colon

abnormality is a disturbance of bowel motility which is modified by psychosocial factors.

IBS symptoms tend to come and go over time and often overlap with other functional disorders such as fibromyalgia, headache, backache and genitourinary symptoms<sup>1</sup>. Severity of symptoms varies and can significantly impair quality of life<sup>3</sup> making people unable to work and visiting doctor more frequently than general population<sup>4</sup>. The multifactorial nature of this disease has created a challenge before the conventional bio-medicine in cure of this disease

completely. So there is need to seek for of alternative system medicine Ayurveda for its management. It is difficult to have correlation between IBS and any particular disease in Ayurveda but based on clinical manifestation rationally it can be correlated with Grahani, Sangraha Grahani and Ghatiyantra Grahani which is a disease of gastro intestinal tract. Grahani is a chronic disease and is mainly produced due to impairment of Agni, which burns within the stomach and is mostly affected by incorrect lifestyle and eating habits<sup>5</sup>. Impaired digestive fire affect the digestive process causing food to be either partially digested or over digested leading to the formation of Ama-toxins. This ultimately weakens the function behind the digestive process itself.

The management of IBS is thus closely dependent upon the management of Agni and Ama. Many Ayurveda herbs mentioned in classics can be successfully used in the management of IBS. Finally, Ayurveda states that the knowledge and principle based rationale of the physician is the ultimate deciding factor in deciding which herbs to use.

# Clinical manifestation of Irritable Bowel Syndrome<sup>1</sup>

The exact cause of Irritable Bowel Syndrome is unknown. Some of possible causes are impaired lifestyle and food habits, psychological factors like stress, anxiety etc. and other illness like episodes of enteric infections and small bowel bacterial growth. Pain or abdominal discomfort is a key symptom for the diagnosis of IBS and have their onset associated with a change in frequency or form of stool. Pain is

exacerbated by eating or emotional stress and improved by passage of flatus or stools. Supportive symptoms include painless diarrhea or constipation, urgency or a feeling of incomplete bowel movement, passing mucous and bloating, altered bowel habits, depression and upper GI symptoms like – dyspepsia, heartburn, nausea and vomiting. Bleeding is not a feature of IBS unless hemorrhoids are present, and malabsorption or weight loss does not occur.

### Irritable Bowel Syndrome and Ayurveda

There is no exact synonym or equivalent term for Irritable Bowel Syndrome in Ayurveda classics. As it has been rightly said that it is not always possible to name a particular disease and not all diseases can be given a definite nomenclature<sup>6</sup>. It is the deranged dosha that cause different diseases base on the site of their aggravation and localization. A physician should try to examine and understand a disease by all its symptoms and then management to get better results<sup>7</sup>. Instead of trying to find an exact synonym of it, we may attempt to find the most possible correlate so that the dosha involvement in this clinical entity could be done at the level of aetiology or aetiothe level pathogenesis or at of symptomatology.

Thus on the basis of its clinical manifestation rationally it can be correlated with Grahani, Sangraha Grahani and Ghatiyantra Grahani mentioned in classical text. Clinical symptoms of Grahani, Sangraha Grahani and Ghatiyantra Grahani are as follows.

**Grahani**<sup>8</sup>: Occasional hard and soft stool, tastelessness, altered taste in tongue, nausea, fainting, edema in upper and lower

extremity, pain in the joint, vomiting, fever, bitter and acid eructation exuding the smell of metal and raw meat.

Vataja Grahani<sup>9</sup>: Dryness of throat and mouth, increase of hunger and thirst, faintness, noises in the ear, frequent attacks of pain in the sides, thighs, groins and the neck, acute gastro intestinal irritation, cardiac pain, emaciation, debility, dysgeusia, griping pain, craving for all kinds of tastes, asthenia of the mind, bloating which increases on empty stomach and relived by taking food, cough and dyspnoea.

**Pittaja Grahani**<sup>10</sup>: Bluish yellow or yellow coloured loose stool containing undigested food material, eructation with foul smell and sour taste, burning sensation in the cardiac region and throat, anorexia and excessive thirst.

Kaphaja Grahani<sup>11</sup>: Nausea, vomiting, stickiness and sweet taste in the mouth, cough, salivation, chronic rhinitis, feeling of sluggishness in the cardiac region, numbness and heaviness in the abdomen, eructation with foul smell and sweet taste, low libido, passing of split stool mixed with mucous and heavy in nature, no emaciation but feeling of weakness and indolent.

**Tridoshaja** Grahani<sup>12</sup>: The mixed symptoms of Vataja, Pittaja and Kaphaja Grahani are found.

**Amaja Grahani:** Separate Amaja Grahani type is mentioned by Sharangadhara<sup>13</sup>. Charaka has not mentioned separate type but has described Grahani disease associated with Ama. Constipation, salivation, pain, burning sensation, anorexia and heaviness are the associated symptoms of Grahani with Ama<sup>14</sup>.

**Sangraha Grahani**<sup>15</sup>: Bowel irritation, liquid, solid, sticky stool passed with sound and mild pain, symptoms appears with the gap of 1 month, 15 days, 10 days or daily, aggravates at day time while relies at night time, difficult to treat and is chronic.

Thus there is quite a good similarity between the symptoms of Sangraha Grahani and IBS. The basic difference lies in the etiopathogenesis and seat of the disease.

**Ghatiyantra Grahani**<sup>16</sup>: Pain in flanks while lying down, gargling sounds similar to the sound of filling a pot with water. This condition is incurable.

Thus it can be concluded that IBS have a wide range of manifestations ranging from upper gastrointestinal reflux symptoms or symptoms referable to the lower The dosha gastrointestinal tract. involvement is mainly pachaka pitta, samana vayu and kledaka kapha. Symptoms of IBS have a strong interlinking with stressful life situation and abnormal psychological profile, so it is not any justification to give similar name that may be synonymous to IBS. But irrespective of the disease entity mentioned above. there is definite derangement of Agni. Thus it can be said that in all patients of IBS, there is a stage of Agni dushti.

# Ayurveda approach to IBS

According to Ayurveda, the malfunction of Agni i.e mandagni is the root cause of the disease pertaining to gastrointestinal tract. Irritable Bowel Syndrome is a disease of gastrointestinal tract more of caused due to psychological and somatic factors. Thus, it requires due consideration to treatment of Agni, mental health and mind. It is expected that those herbs which possess Dipaniya

(Appetizer), Pachaniya (Digestant), Grahi (GI protective and absorbents) and Mana prasadak (Mind pacifiers) properties may help in the treatment of IBS.

## A. Dipaniya (Appetizer)

Herbs that stimulate digestion or enhance the Agni (digestive fire) are included in it. has mentioned Charaka Dipaniya Pippalimula, Mahakashaya -Pippali, Chavya, Chitraka, Shunthi, Amlavetas, Marich. Ajmoda, Bhallatakakasthi. Hinguniryas<sup>17</sup>.

#### **B.** Pachaniya (Digestant)

Herbs that digest Ama or aids in digestion are included in it. Sushruta has mentioned Pippalyadi gana<sup>18</sup>, Dashmula gana<sup>19</sup> as Ama pachaka and Mustadi gana<sup>20</sup> act as pachaka. Most of the herbs mentioned in Dipaniya are included in Pachaniya and vice versa. As the herbs possessing Dipaniya property initiates the process of Pachaniya itself. Given below is the list of some commonly used Dipaniya and Pachaniya herbs.

Table 1: List of Dipaniya (Digestive stimulant) and Pachaniya (Digestant) herbs

Herbs	<b>Botanical Name</b>	Family	Useful	Classical indications
			part	
Pippali	Piper longum	Piperaceae	Fruit,	Indigestion, anorexia <sup>21</sup>
	Linn.		Root	
Chavya	Piper retrofractum	Piperaceae	Root	Grahani <sup>22</sup>
	Vahl.			
Chitraka	Plumbago	Plumbaginace	Root	Indigestion and Grahani <sup>23</sup>
	zeylanica Linn.	ae		
Shunthi	Zingiber officinale	Zinziberaceae	Rhizome	Anorexia <sup>24</sup> , deficient
	Roscoe.			digestion <sup>25,26</sup> , Ama pachaka in Grahani <sup>27</sup>
Amlavetas	<i>Hippophae</i>	Elaeagnaceae	Fruit	Indigestion and anorexia in
Aimavetas	salcifolia D.Don	Liaeagnaceae	Tiuit	Grahani <sup>28</sup> flatulence <sup>29</sup>
Marich	Piper nigrum Linn.	Piperaceae	Fruit	Digestive stimulant <sup>30</sup> ,
Widitch	riper nigrum Linn.	riperaceae	Tiuit	anorexia & Grahani <sup>31</sup>
Ajmoda	Apium graveolens	Apiaceae	Fruit	Indigestion and loss of
Ajinoda	Linn.	Apraceae	Tiuit	appetite <sup>32</sup> , flatulence <sup>29</sup>
	Ziiii.			appetite , naturence
Hingu	Ferula narthex	Apiaceae	Resin	Anorexia & flatulence <sup>33</sup> ,
	Boiss.	1		
Yavani	Trachyspermum	Apiaceae	Fruit	Anorexia <sup>34</sup> , Grahani <sup>35</sup>
	ammi Sprague	-		
	Linn.			36
Dhanyaka	Coriandrum	Apiaceae	Fruit,	Indigestion <sup>36</sup> , diarrhea
	sativum Linn.		whole plant	associated with pain <sup>37,38</sup>
Beejapura	Citrus medica	Rutaceae	Fruit	Anorexia <sup>39</sup> , Grahani <sup>40</sup>
JP *****	Linn.			,
Vacha	Acorus calamus	Araceae	Rhizome	Ama pachaka <sup>41,42</sup> ,

	Linn.			Grahani <sup>43</sup> ,
Ativisha	Aconitum	Ranunculacea	Rhizome	Ama pachaka in Grahani <sup>27</sup> ,
	heterophyllum	e		
	Wall.			

### C. Grahi (GI protective and absorbents)

Herbs which acts as appetizer as well as aids in digestion while absorbing the fluids are included in it. Grahi or Sangrahi is of two types viz., Ama (Ushna) Sangrahi and Pakwa (Sheeta) Sangrahi. The former will digest the Ama and absorbs the fluids and the later will stop the pakwa malas in Atisara (diarrhoea) etc., and stops their excretion. In other words Grahi may be considered as Ushna Sangrahi and

Sthambhana (Anti diarrheal) may be considered as Sheeta Sangrahi. Given below is the list of some Ushna Sangrahi and Sheeta Sangrahi herbs which can be used rationally as per condition and dosha involvement. Herbs like Bilva, Jatiphala, Patha, Sunthi, Jeerak, Gajapippali, etc., are included in Ushna Sangrahi and herbs like Kutaja, Mustaka etc,. are included in Sheeta Sangrahi

.Table 2: List of Grahi (GI protective and absorbents) herbs

Herbs	Botanical	Family	Useful	Classical	Recent
	Name		part	indications	researches
Bilva	Aegel marmelos Corr.	Rutaceae	Unripe fruit	Diarrhea with mucous and blood <sup>44</sup> ,	Gastro protective effect, anti- diarrheal activity <sup>45</sup>
Mustaka	Cyperus rotundus Linn.	Cyperaceae	Rhizome	Diarrhea <sup>46</sup> Grahani <sup>27</sup>	Gastro protective effect <sup>47</sup> , anti-diarrheal activity <sup>48</sup>
Jatiphala	Myristica fragrans Houtt	Myristicaceae	Seed, seed cover	Diarrhea associated with Ama <sup>49</sup> .	Anti-diarrheal activity <sup>50</sup>
Patha	Cissampelos pareira Linn.	Menispermac eae	Root	Diarrhea <sup>51</sup>	Gastro protective effect <sup>52</sup> , anti-diarrheal activity <sup>53</sup>
Kutaja	Holarrhena antidysenterica (Linn.)Wall.	Apocynaceae	Bark, Seed	Diarrhea <sup>54</sup> , Stool with mucus and blood <sup>55</sup> .	Anti-diarrheal activity <sup>56,57</sup>
Shunthi	Zingiber officinale Roscoe.	Zinziberaceae	Rhizome	Diarrhea <sup>58,59</sup> Grahani <sup>60</sup>	Gastro protective effect <sup>61</sup> Anti diarrheal activity <sup>62</sup>
Jeeraka	Cuminum cyminum Linn.	Apiaceae	Seed	Diarrhea <sup>63</sup> Grahani <sup>64</sup>	Anti-diarrheal activity <sup>66</sup>

				Anorexia <sup>65</sup>	
Gajapipp ali	Piper retrofractum Vahl.	Piperaceae	Fruit	Diarrhea with blood & mucus <sup>67</sup> .	Gastro protective effect <sup>68</sup> , Anti diarrheal activity <sup>69</sup>
Dadima	Punica granatum Linn.	Punicaceae	Fruit, fruit cover	Grahani <sup>70</sup> Diarrhea <sup>71</sup>	Gastro protective effect <sup>72</sup> , anti-ulcer activity <sup>73</sup> , Anti diarrheal activity of seed <sup>74</sup> and peel <sup>75</sup>
Vriksham ala	Garcinia indica Chois	Guttiferae	Ripe Fruit	Grahani <sup>76</sup> Stimulates digestive power <sup>77</sup>	Anti-ulcer <sup>78</sup> and anti-diarrheal activity <sup>79</sup> .

# D. Mana prasadaka (Mind pacifier)

Herbs that relieve stress and causes happiness of mind are generally included in

it. Given below is the list of herbs which can be used as mind pacifiers.

Table 3: List of Mana prasadak (Mind pacifier) herbs

Herbs	<b>Botanical Name</b>	Family	Part used	Recent researches
Ashwagandha	Withania somnifera Dunal	Solanaceae	Root	Anti-stress, anti-anxiety and anti-oxidant activity <sup>80</sup> .
Shankhapushpi	Convolvulus pluricaulis Chois	Convolvulace ae	Whole plant	Anti depressant <sup>81</sup> and anti-stress activity <sup>82</sup> .
Mandukaparni	Centella asiatica (L.) Urban	Umbelliferae	Whole plant	Anti-stress, adaptogenic and anti-anxiety activity <sup>83</sup> .
Brahmi	Bacopa moniera Linn.	Scrophulariac eae	Whole plant	Anti-oxidant and anti- depressant activity <sup>84</sup>
Jatamansi	Nordostachys jatamansi DC.	Valerianaceae	Rhizome	Anti-stress and adaptogenic activity <sup>85</sup> .
Vacha	Acorus calamus L.	Araceae	Rhizome	Anti-oxidant activity <sup>86</sup> Anti depressant <sup>87</sup>
Jyotishmati	Celastrus panniculata Willd	Celatraceae	Seed, seed oil	Anti-oxidant, anti- depressant and anti- anxiety activity <sup>88</sup>
Vata	Ficus bengalensis L.	Moraceae	Bark	Anti-oxidant and anti- stress activity <sup>89</sup>

#### **CONCLUSION**

Urbanization process has caused poor lifestyle choices, such as smoking, overuse of alcohol, faulty food habits, insufficient physical activity and chronic stress, having a strong impact on digestive system. Irritable Bowel Syndrome has multi factorial causative factors having a strong psycho somatic base with improper lifestyle playing a vital role in the etiopathogenesis and exacerbation of the disease. No single health care system can mitigate this problem entirely and so alternative health care system like Ayurveda can prove to be beneficial. Many Ayurveda herbs mentioned in classics used rationally can facilitate management of disease.

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